A Discussion Paper on Community Development

NOVA SCOTIA

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A Discussion Paper on Community Development

Introduction

In these early years of the 21st century, Nova Scotia's communities – large and small, urban or rural – are all confronting change:

- Where are the best opportunities? The key challenges?
- What can communities do about them?
- How can governments best help?

Opportunities for Prosperity, Nova Scotia's economic growth strategy[1] made developing regional capacity one of the province's seven strategic priorities. The Growth Strategy also promised to develop a comprehensive community economic development (CED) policy built on recent, localized experience.

In moving to fulfill this promise, the government reviewed the work of several organizations actively involved in CED: regional development authorities, the Sustainable Communities Initiative, the Coastal Communities Network, the Black Business Initiative, le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Ecosse, among others.

Two lessons emerged from that review. First, Nova Scotians can successfully take charge of their communities' futures. Second, the term "community economic development" should be replaced by a broader term – one that talks about the social, environmental, and cultural futures of communities as well as their economics.

To move this work ahead, Nova Scotia has established an interdepartmental Community Development Advisory Group to prepare a policy defining government's role in helping communities increase their sustainability.

A key activity will be consultations with stakeholders across the province. These will provide an opportunity for direct community input to the policy development process. The current paper forms a backdrop for these discussions, raising questions about the challenges communities face and what governments and communities should do about them.

Background

Community Challenges

Like other jurisdictions, Nova Scotia has been hit by globalization, changing trade rules, increased competition for markets, urbanization, and rapid technological change. Fewer resource-based jobs and a focus on business as the driver of the economy add to the complexity of the current challenge, while new social pressures further complicate the situation.

An aging population, outmigration of youth, growing youth unemployment, and changing family structures are some of the demographic and economic realities we now face in Nova Scotia, as do other jurisdictions. The question for us is how do we respond locally to the new pressures, in ways that are most beneficial for our individual communities?

Recent research by Canadian Policy Research Networks[2] highlights four factors that determine our well-being:

- adequate family income
- close personal relationships
- supportive communities
- effective public services, such as schools, health care and transportation

Given the broad scope of these determinants of quality of life, it becomes clear that an integration of the economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions will be required to achieve personal and community well-being. This will challenge both communities and governments to combine economic development efforts with broader community and social objectives such as:

- promoting community health and wellness
- ensuring community safety and security
- delivering affordable housing and transportation
- providing education, training and retraining
- investing in recreation and public open space
- preserving heritage and culture
- promoting community capacity to address community needs
- planning social infrastructure – schools, hospitals, nursing homes
- ensuring funding for community and voluntary organizations

Population

The population of many communities outside Halifax is both declining and aging.

Declining - Between 1996 and 2001, Nova Scotia's overall population decreased by 0.1% [Table 1].

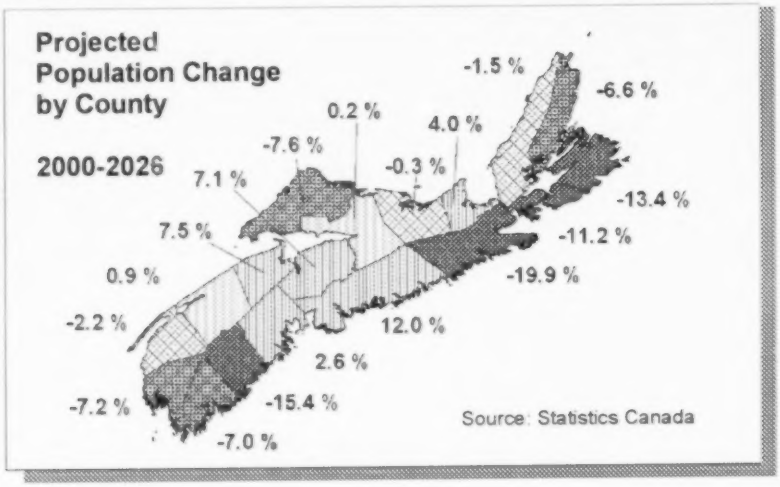
- Cape Breton and Richmond counties declined by 7.2%
- Guysborough county declined by 10%
- Only Hants and Halifax counties grew significantly
- Birth rates have declined
- Net out-migration of youth (18-24 years) was approximately 4000
- Nova Scotia's immigration rates have declined from 1.4% of the national total to 0.08%
- Projected population numbers suggest only Halifax, Lunenburg, Hants, Kings and Antigonish counties will grow in the next 25 years [Figure 1]

Table 1 - Nova Scotia Counties Growing & Shrinking

	2001	1996	Percent change		2001	1996	Percent change
Halifax	359,183	342,966	4.7 %	Pictou	46,965	48,718	-3.6 %
Hants	40,513	39,483	2.6 %	Shelburne	16,231	17,002	-4.5 %
Antigonish	19,578	19,554	0.1 %	Digby	19,548	20,500	-4.6 %
Colchester	49,307	49,262	0.1 %	Inverness	19,937	20,918	-4.7 %
Lunenburg	47,591	47,561	0.1 %	Queens	11,723	12,417	-5.6 %
Kings	58,866	59,193	-0.6 %	Victoria	7,962	8,482	-6.1%
Yarmouth	26,843	27,310	-1.7 %	Richmond	10,225	11,022	-7.2 %
Annapolis	21,773	22,324	-2.5 %	Cape Breton	109,330	117,849	-7.2 %
Cumberland	32,605	33,804	-3.5 %	Guysborough	9,827	10,917	-10 %

Source: Statistics Canada

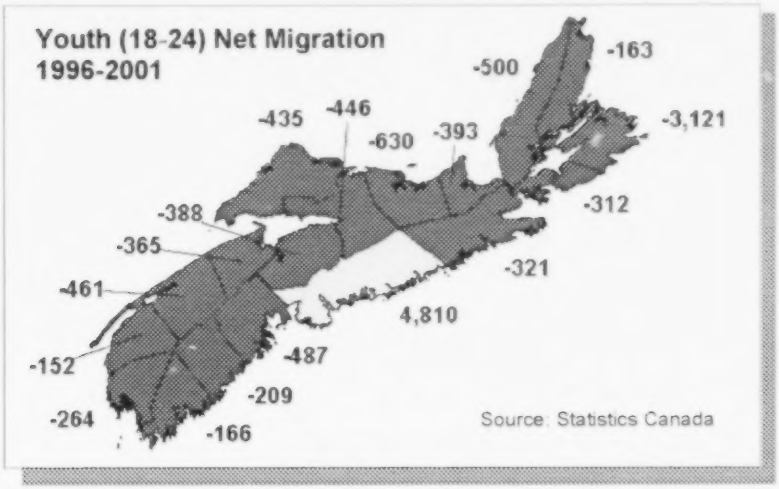
Figure 1



Aging - Between 1991 and 2001, the provincial average age increased from 33.4 years to 38.8.

- Nova Scotia has the oldest population in Canada
- Young people are leaving many communities [Figure 2]
- Halifax has a relatively young population at 36.6 years
- Outside metro, the average age is 40.3 years
- Nova Scotia's Aboriginal population counters this aging trend - almost half of the province's Aboriginals are under the age of 25, compared to 31% of non-Aboriginal persons

Figure 2



Employment changes

Industry changes - especially in the natural resource sector - and new technology are resulting in job losses in some communities and new opportunities in others.

- Many new jobs require higher education and different skills than those jobs being lost.
- 55% of Nova Scotians are graduates from a trade school, college, or university but not all possess the skills needed for the modern labour force.

Social and Physical Infrastructure

Given the population and economic changes, communities also face challenges maintaining their physical infrastructure (roads, water, energy, telecommunications, etc.) and social supports (hospitals, schools, etc.).

Environment

Nova Scotia's *Green Plan*[3] emphasizes that protecting and sustaining the environment is essential to our health, our economy, and our collective well-being. Nova Scotians recognize the link between healthy communities and a healthy environment. Nova Scotians care about:

- sustainable land use
- sewage management
- trans-border pollution
- water quality
- our individual and collective impact on the environment, local and global

Government

Communities have drawn attention to factors involving the provincial government's support for community development, including the need for:

- more and better specific services
- better co-ordination among government departments and between governments
- more community involvement in government decision-making
- clearer, more accessible information and easier two-way communication

Question:
What challenges is your community facing ?

Nova Scotia's Community Development Policy Initiative

Citizens, communities, and government all want to do something about the changes that are occurring. In these days of tight budgets, simply spending more money is not an option. Government is seeking input about what it can and cannot do to support communities.

The changes occurring in Nova Scotia affect different communities differently. The challenges facing Guysborough or Victoria differ from those confronting Kings or Hants. An effective community development policy will identify these differences and provide a framework for communities to develop initiatives that target their areas of concern.

Nova Scotia is preparing a community development policy to guide provincial government departments in their work with communities. The policy objective is to define government's role in supporting communities in their efforts to increase sustainability.

Formally, a government policy provides a framework within which delegated authority may be exercised. Policy gives guidance to the direction government wishes to take on a particular issue. It also defines the amount and type of discretion staff can exercise within their specific areas of influence.

In developing a policy, steps are taken to analyze the situation before the policy is formulated. Once the challenge/opportunity has been identified and the desired objectives defined, research, analysis, and consultation are required before the optimal approach can be recommended to Government. Consultations to discuss the ideas and questions raised in this discussion paper are a key step in identifying what a community development policy should look like.

An effective community development policy should:

- clarify the services the provincial government provides
- build more collaboration, co-operation, and co-ordination among communities, among departments, and between departments and communities
- develop ways to assess the impact of government policies and programs on communities
- improve mechanisms to identify and develop community assets to enhance the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well being of Nova Scotians

What is Community Development ?

The Community Development Advisory Group, made up of representatives from all provincial government departments and agencies, has begun work on this initiative. One aspect of the work to date has been considering definitions and principles of community development.

Definitions[4]

Community: In the community development context, "community" may be broadly defined as a group of people who live and interact in a specific geographic area. There are also communities of people with shared cultures or common interests who live within geographic boundaries but transcend them as well.

There are many ways to describe communities, but essentially, communities define themselves when they decide to take action. Communities can be at different stages of development. A useful first step for any community is to assess where it stands. British Columbia defines communities according to a scale beginning with "conflicted" at the low end of development through to "learning cultured" at the high end.[5]

Sustainable community development: This is a process in which a community enhances its environmental, social, cultural, and economic resources to create positive outcomes for its members. It is based on mutually beneficial, interdependent relationships among community members and with neighbouring communities, community-based decision making, and respect for social inclusion.

Sustainable community: Such a community maintains, enhances, or improves its environmental, social, cultural, and economic resources in ways that support current and future community members in their pursuit of healthy, productive, and happy lives.

Question:
Can you suggest improvements to these definitions ?

Principles

Given the diversity of Nova Scotia's communities, the particular recipe for community development will vary depending on the values and unique qualities of individual communities. Experience in Nova Scotia as elsewhere suggests that a set of basic principles underpins successful community development processes.

THESE PRINCIPLES INCLUDE:

Recognition of Local Leadership - Community plays an integral role in building the process.

Common Vision - Communities define a common vision for their future.

Partnerships and Shared Interests - The process effectively engages necessary partners at the community and governmental levels.

Democratic Decision-Making - All community members have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

Focus on Community Assets - The process builds on existing community capacity and assets.

Evidence-Based Decision-Making - Decision-making is based on best practices and informed by evidence about the costs and benefits of taking action.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKS BEST WHEN GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITIES WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE:

Respect for local values - Community values are understood and respected.

Sustainability - Communities are enabled to take a long-term perspective to safeguard the interests of future generations.

Social Inclusion - Everyone has the opportunity to fulfill their potential, through access to high-quality public services, education and employment opportunities, decent housing and good local environmental conditions.

Horizontal and Coordinated Approach - Governments and their departments work together and take an integrated and co-ordinated approach in working with communities.

Transparency and Accountability - An accountability framework exists to ensure transparency, participation, access to information and evidence-based decision-making.

Question:
What changes would you suggest to these principles ?

Government and Community Development

"The role of government is to protect and promote the well-being of its citizens – all citizens, including future generations."[6] Government's role continues to evolve in response to global and domestic developments. A sophisticated, well-informed public expects government to re-think what it can and cannot do, and how best to do it.

A challenge for government in promoting community development is reconciling basic community development principles with traditional government structures and approaches. Community development focuses on local assets. It assumes communities have the ability and authority to control local resources and solve their own problems. Government's primary role will be to support those efforts.

Government programs at all levels have traditionally tended to focus on deficiencies, seeking to "fix" problems. Because programming has been set up this way, communities can defer to the "system," relying on governments to solve their problems. Citizens may retreat in the face of "professional" expertise, and communities become better known more for their deficiencies than their assets.

Today, the new reality is that many communities throughout Nova Scotia are challenging traditional approaches and are now successfully solving their own problems. While government still has a role to play in this process, it is a changing one. These changes will require a significant shift in thinking and action among government departments.

What is the best and most appropriate role for the government of Nova Scotia?

Possible roles government could play in community development include:

Providing Financial Assistance

Providing money, through programs or projects, is a common method for government to support both individual initiatives and the process of community development itself. The danger exists, however, that community-based projects become dependent on external funding, thus reducing community capacity rather than building it. Furthermore, the limits to government funding have often been demonstrated in recent years.

Manager

In the past, governments have often managed programs supporting community development. In Nova Scotia, *Mainstreet* and *The Community Opportunities Fund* are recent examples.

Creating Supportive Environments

In successful community development, government supports but does not direct the process. One way to support community development is to develop policies and legislation consistent with community development principles and practices. The public and voluntary sectors have asked for consistent approaches and services from government. An increased commitment to community development among all government departments - and commitment to a province-wide community development policy - should enhance the government's ability to make the consistent, reliable responses community initiatives require.

Providing Information

Government is a resource for useful information on the state of communities. Statistics Canada data is one well-known source, but there are other repositories of worthwhile information at the federal, provincial, municipal, and non-governmental levels. Making decisions based on sound information will help communities make better choices. Getting good information to communities in forms useful to them is an important role for government.

Consultant to Communities

A consultant helps people achieve their goals. The consulting process requires the consultant to play a variety of roles. Each situation determines the skills required. These may include - but are not be limited to - technical, communications, group development, teaching, and facilitation. The emphasis remains on the community - helping communities achieve *their* goals.

As consultants, government agencies and staff could become involved in:

Training and Education – Government agencies can support training programs that meet the general needs of different communities. Government can also support specialized training needs of particular communities.

Community Assessment - Communities often need assistance to initiate the community development process. Working with local leadership, government can facilitate the process of assessing community assets.

Organizational and Institutional Development - Much of what is accomplished in communities results from work being done through local organizations. These organizations take the talents and assets of individuals and collectively build on them. Group effectiveness largely depends on the ability to function cohesively. A consultant can help make the most of the resources of the organization.

Leadership Development – Good leadership is essential for community organizations to be successful. Government can support and enhance community leadership capacity.

Readiness for Change - Consultants are frequently invited to work with communities facing significant challenges. Consultants may also facilitate the change process by identifying, and getting involved with, communities that need help. In either role, the consultant must respect local values and community development principles.

Collaboration and Co-ordination

Government can co-ordinate resources to support community development. Government agencies can bring key partners, government and non-government, together.

Improved communication and collaboration among governments and government departments will facilitate a more co-ordinated response to community challenges and needs.

Measuring Progress

A broad commitment to common community development principles shifts the focus from measuring the success of individual agency programs to measuring the outcomes achieved by communities through those programs.

Government can provide data, information, and technical assistance to help communities assess where they stand and how well they are progressing towards their social, cultural, economic, and environmental goals.

Questions:

- **What do you think are the best and most appropriate roles for Government in community development ?**
- **What do you see as the role of "Community" in community development ?**
- **How can government and community better work together to achieve community development goals ?**

Sustainable Community Indicators

An indicator is something that helps you understand where you are, where you are going and how far you are from where you want to be. The Community Development Advisory Group has developed a set of Sustainable Community Indicators to inform government decision-making in relation to how government policies and programs affect communities

Economy Indicators
Labour Force Profile
Economic Diversification
Income
Access to Capital

Education Indicators
Educational Attainment
Services and Facilities

Environmental Indicators
Water Quality
Air Quality
Contaminated Sites
Energy Use
Land Use
Recycling/Waste Management

Government Indicators
Participation
Taxes
Assessments
Services and Facilities

Health Indicators
Access to Health Care
Health Status
Mortality
Health Promotion

Housing Indicators
Access to Housing
Housing Condition

Population Indicators
Population Change
Population Structure
Migration

Recreation and Cultural Indicators
Participation
Accessibility
Recreational Land, Services and Facilities

Resource Indicators
Fish
Forestry
Minerals and Energy
Water
Land

Society Indicators
Sense of Community
Perceived Quality of Life
Connectedness
Diversity
Civic Engagement

Family/Household Indicators
Family Structure
Household Structure
Unpaid Work
Care Giving
Support for Families

Public Safety Indicators
Crime Rate
Accidents
Self-Reported Feeling of Safety

Infrastructure Indicators
Transportation
Sewer/Water Systems
Telecommunications

Question:
What do you think are indicators of a sustainable community?

Information Sources

Nova Scotia is not the only province re-examining how it approaches community development. The federal government, other provinces and territories, and many other jurisdictions are working on issues like the ones raised in this paper. Under headings like *community development*, *community economic development*, or *rural development*, lively discussion is taking place world-wide. Nova Scotia can contribute to this discussion and learn from it. Some reliable sources include:

Coastal Communities Network:
http://www.coastalcommunities.ns.ca/

Rural Communities Impacting Policy:
http://ruralnovascotia.ca

NS CED Support:
http://ced.gov.ns.ca

Atlantic GPI - The Genuine Progress Index:
http://www.gpiatlantic.org

Nova Scotia Rural Team:
http://www.rural.gc.ca/team/ns/novascotia_e.phtml

The Canadian CED Network:
http://www.canadiancednetwork.org

Ontario's Rural Strategy:
http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_15741_1.html

Quebec's Local and Regional Policy:
http://www.mreg.gouv.qc.ca/fr/article/Publication/ang-pol.pdf

Manitoba's Rural Strategy:
http://www.gov.mb.ca/ia/downloads/rurstrat.pdf

Saskatchewan's Rural Strategy:
http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/acre/default.asp

The Cities & Environment Unit:
http://www.dal.ca/~ceunit/

The Rural and Small Town Programme:
http://www.mta.ca/rstp/

Canadian Federation of Independent Business:
www.cfib.ca

Nova Scotia Sustainable Communities Initiative:
http://www.nsaccess.ns.ca/sci/

Other Sources . . .

Newfoundland and Labrador's Community Accounts

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has developed a community-based information system that provides data to assist in identifying opportunities, tracking social well-being and evaluating specific programs.

The system enables anyone to retrieve and analyze data for the following areas of interest: health, education, social, income, labour market, demographics, resource/wealth, production, consumption and well-being.

Communities can monitor the social and economic landscape and easily compare themselves to other communities, regions, the province and the nation.

http://www.communityaccounts.ca

Target Nova Scotia

Key location advantages offered by Nova Scotia communities include a skilled, educated and available workforce, competitive cost structures, and a clean, attractive and pleasant environment.

A website called Target Nova Scotia has been created to help identify and promote community assets. Target Nova Scotia is a unified information tool, bringing together a broad array of information sourced at local, provincial and national levels. This partnership project represents the combined efforts and resources of several departments and agencies of the federal Government of Canada and the provincial Government of Nova Scotia, working together with local development organizations and private sector partners.

http://www.targetnovascotia.com

Oregon's Community Development Teams

The state of Oregon has adopted a community solutions approach to community development that focuses state agencies and local governments working together to solve problems, leverage resources, and integrate investments. Government institutions in Oregon were set up during an earlier time when it was the standard to work independently rather together. However, fewer resources and an increasing demand for services required changes in how government operated.

In 1998, a Community Development Office was established to provide a community-based problem solving approach both within state agencies and between local and state government. The office is made up of five Regional Coordinators located throughout the state and three staff located in a central office. Along with the creation of the office, was the formation of Regional Community Solutions Teams composed of field staff from various state agencies. The structure allows for a more integrated and coordinated approach to community development. The benefit to communities of state agencies working together at the state level is a better understanding of local priorities by agencies, increased access to state services and less fragmented results "on-the-ground." In addition to shortening response time, the deployment of interagency teams also provides local communities with direct access to an array of specialized skills. For the state of Oregon, the network of multi-agency teams is an efficient service delivery system and an effective feedback loop for continuously improving services to local communities.

http://communitysolutions.state.or.us

Next Steps

The Government of Nova Scotia is committed to creating a provincial community development policy to guide the work of government departments in their work with communities. A more consistent government approach to community development will integrate social, economic, cultural, and environmental objectives.

Consistency will improve the ability of communities to engage in activities that lead to their growth, development, and sustainability. The more government works together, the more it will be able to help communities develop.

Community consultations to discuss the key questions raised in this paper will be held throughout the province in October 2003. The input and views received throughout the consultation process will be incorporated into the drafting of a community development policy by the end of December 2003.

For more information on the consultation schedule or the Community Development Policy Initiative, please:

- Contact Judy Fowler at 902 424 5794 or fowlerjg@gov.ns.ca
- Visit our website at: http://www.gov.ns.ca/econ/cdpolicy/

If you are unable to attend the consultation session in your county and would like to submit comments on the questions in this paper, you can do so:

By Mail: Community Development Policy Initiative
Nova Scotia Economic Development
PO Box 2311
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3C8

By Fax: 902 424 0500

By Email: comm@gov.ns.ca

Summary of Questions

- *What challenges is your community facing?*
- *Can you suggest improvements to these definitions?*
- *What changes would you suggest to these principles?*
- *What do you think are the best and most appropriate roles for government in community development?*
- *What do you see as the role of "Community" in community development?*
- *How can government and community work together to achieve community development goals?*
- *What do you think are indicators of a sustainable community?*

ENDNOTES

[1] Province of Nova Scotia, *Opportunities for Prosperity*, 2000, pg. 21.
[2] Maxwell, Judith, *The Great Social Transformation: Implications for the Social Role of Government in Ontario*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, September 2003.
[3] Province of Nova Scotia, *Towards a Sustainable Environment*, 2003.
[4] Hart, Maureen, *Guide to Sustainable Community Indicators (Second Edition)*, 1999.
[5] Stolte, Mike and Stacey, Anne, CFDC of Central Kootenay/Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership, *Evolution of Communities Matrix*, May 2003.
[6] Maxwell, pg 3.